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ENTER VICTORY.

At last I come. A solemn hush
Falls on the world. The silent gun
Stops short the warriors' final rush ;
The bloody work of war is done.

To those I come, who gladly gave
The price to human freedom due ;
My laurels bending o'er their grave,
Their ancient glory shall renew.

To you I come, who did endure
Unto the end, bearing the palm.
Now let the eager joy bells pour
Their silver music o'er the calm.

THE APPROACH OF PEACE.

Softly she comes, and in her tender eyes
Sweet promise dwells,
And mirrored beauties caught from Paradise.
The glad earth swells
Beneath her quickening feet, and flowers arise ;
New life her presence tells.

E. H. P.

Notes of the Month.

Our first note a month ago was written in a spirit of cheerful anticipation, inspired by the thought that peace was in view, and this would be the last winter of war. That anticipation was realised more speedily and dramatically than we ventured to hope. November 11th, the day longed for so ardently, and likely to be for ever noteworthy, saw the cessation of hostilities, and we all breathed freely and thankfully once again. Never was a greater relief vouchsafed to enduring and suffering mankind! For four and a quarter years there had been no release from the terrible trials and exacting experiences of warfare. Many of us lived in constant dread of what each hour might bring forth—loss of life or limb to loved ones, poignant sorrow overshadowing the homes of acquaintances or friends. In proportion to the hourly suspense, the daily dread, was the sense of heartfelt relief when we learned that the great conflict had ceased, giving us the hoped-for victory. No wonder that the general joy was real and unrestrained, and if some of its manifestations were mistaken, who could harshly criticise? But far more fitting, and as spontaneous as they were sincere, were the services of thankfulness and praise called forth either immediately or on the 17th of November. We have no doubt that our Moderator's call to observance found everywhere ready response. Our debt to the soldiers and sailors is great, and could not be over-estimated, and yet we felt that "God had done great things for us whereof we were glad."

That spirit of devout gratitude should not be evanescent, but should inspire us all with deeper devotion and attune all our hearts to profounder praise.

* *

Our Christmasses came and passed with the message of peace and good-will resounding incongruously amid the clamours of war. Its angelic note had a sound of unreality, or at best of idealistic anticipation. In one of the finest of our Christmas hymns the dissonance was strikingly reflected and rebuked:

> "And man, at war with man, hears not
> The love song which they bring:
> O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
> And hear the angels sing."

But now we look forward to a Christmas season when the injunction of the hymn is to be the realisation in fact, when the message of the angels will not jar with but merge into the character of earthly practices and ways. We hope it will be possible for many of our members now far away to rejoin their families, and make complete the long imperfect family circles. That we shall all realise as never before all that peace implies, and all that the Christmas celebration symbolises, we cannot doubt. Over old and young will rest a richer benediction of quiet happiness and domestic joy, imparting fuller meaning to the love of kith and kin, and making even commonplace acts of kindness a true sacrament of grace.

* *

Yet peace comes not as a sentiment, but as a great and gracious opportunity of service. We wish to conserve and to cherish all the larger resources of self-sacrifice and heroic endeavour which a time of war so strikingly revealed. The energy, the enterprise, the spirit of adventure, must surely be utilised for purposes of reconstruction. For the sake of the Empire which heroism has preserved, we must be prepared to live and to labour. It is a splendid thing to die for one's country when the occasion calls, but it is also a no less splendid thing to live for its truest welfare.

There were many good causes which enlisted our sympathy and practical support during the war. How magnificent was the response they evoked not alone in money, but also in varied forms of personal endeavour. Yet with the coming of established peace in the immediate future, other good causes will demand thought and call for support. Things like education, housing, temperance, will suggest much-needed reforms, not to be accomplished without a strong public opinion and zealous public service. It has ever been our boast as a religious community that in proportion to our numbers we have responded worthily to such appeals. We can never hope for greater opportunities than those which are likely to present themselves in the immediate future. The establishment of a Guild of Social Service in connection with the General Synod is exceedingly timely, and we hope for it a real, practical success. But this it can only have through the whole-hearted support of our members. We are assured that when its objects are known they will not fail to receive due support.

* *

We hope that all our congregations will not overlook one simple but important duty—the bringing up to date of their individual congregational Roll of Honour. In the near future it will be desirable to form a complete list of all the men who have gone forth from our congregations as soldiers or as sailors. Such will naturally form a most precious memorial of the war. The General Assembly has already sent out an appeal to all orthodox Presbyterian congregations to make a complete return of their members. Its officials would also welcome returns from our own congregations, not for inclusion, of course, amongst their own lists, but for separate registration as the contribution of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Personally, we see no reason why we should not comply with their request, and be enrolled as a section of the larger Presbyterian Church. Be that as it may, our object here is to urge our

ministers and officials generally to see to the careful and complete compilation of their lists of combatant members.

* *

At Hitchen, announcing the resignation of six Sunday-school workers in the course of a month, the Vicar of St. Mary's states in his parish magazine :—" The obvious inference seems to be that the Sunday-school system is played out, and that the Sunday-school teachers are losing interest in it. It has had a fair trial now for over fifty years, and, judging from the results disclosed by the experience of the chaplains with our vast armies, it appears to have been a pretty complete failure as a means of turning our boys into intelligent worshipping Christians. Anyhow the time seems to have come in this parish when we must try a different course, and we have therefore resolved to substitute a children's service for the afternoon Sunday-school. The morning Sunday-school will continue as it has done hitherto."

The Vicar is wrong. Sunday-school teaching is not " played out," though the kind of teaching given in such schools as his may be. If he were to adopt the teaching of Jesus instead of that prescribed by his Church he would have more success with his boys. Sunday-school teaching of the right kind is as much wanted now as ever it was to form the character and regulate the conduct of the people.

A Thought for the Month

" CHRISTMAS AND THE COMING OF PEACE."

" And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

—LUKE ii. 13, 14.

How beautiful is this emblem of the interest of heaven in the affairs of earth ; what an expression of that love which binds the moral universe together, as attraction the material !

If " the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," at the creation, how much more should praise be given, that now the moral wreck and chaos were about to be restored to order, and men to become new creatures ! Or, if " there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," how much livelier the jubilee when the Saviour was born, to call sinners to repentance, and reconcile the world to God ! How rapturous must have been the thanksgivings to Him who is the original and uncreated Source of all good, mercy and truth ; and who so loved the world that He sent His Son to save it !

The angels sang praises to God for the Messenger He was now sending to bless the world. Worship is one of the highest acts of man or angel ; and an intimation, as it were, is given here that, under the new dispensation, idolatry was to come to an end, and glory and honour supreme to be given to whom alone they are due. Nor in vain. Earth is slowly preparing to echo back, one day, from all her green shores, and with the deep tone of her millions, the heavenly pæan,—Glory to God in the highest !

" And on earth peace." Jesus was to be the Prince of Peace. It was one of his loftiest titles. Peace on earth, which has, heretofore, been such a Golgotha, might seem Utopian indeed, unless we consider the power of him who came to reign in human hearts and lives, and to bring every thought into captivity to himself. Filled with peace himself, he came to breathe it through all souls, quelling ambition, and anger, and revenge. He produces peace in the inner man, by harmonising all the passions and appetites under the sway of conscience and reason, the voices of God ; peace in the world by the love of man to man, and universal equity ; peace and reconciliation towards God, by the revelation of His mercy to the penitent offender, and His wise purposes in our trials and sorrows.

" Goodwill towards men." From God to man, and from man to man

More than peace, there was to be benevolence, positive kindness, sympathy, and relief. Man was to mete out to others that love which God meted out to him. The Saviour went about doing good, and he calls all his followers to engage in the offices of philanthropy. His religion has been eminently a religion of benevolence, even in its past imperfect manifestations. It has founded hospitals and schools, and missions and ministries to the poor and lost. It has crossed the bounds of country and colour, and scattered the best gifts of time and eternity over dark and oppressed lands. But the angelic triad — Piety, Peace, and Benevolence—has but just begun to take effect. What happiness and glory, then, may we not expect from its future and hastening consummation!—A. A. Livermore, included in Mary Carpenter's Collection of Meditations.

THANKSGIVING SERMON.

Delivered by Rev. E. H. Pickering, M.A., at a Thanksgiving Service held in All Souls' Church, Belfast, on the evening of 11th November, 1918.

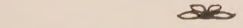
"The Lord hath done great things for us.—Ps. cxxvi. 3." I do not wish, presumptuously and exultingly, to declare that we should claim God to have been on our side. He who has just suffered the greatest downfall the world has known since Napoleon, declared that God was on his side; but now where is he with all his vaunting pride? But nevertheless, we must declare that the Lord hath done great things for us. How else could we have reached this present auspicious result? During the past four years, especially during the spring of this present year, we and our allies have known such great reverses, and suffered such appalling tribulations, that oftentimes the enemy has wondered why we did not declare our defeat. But we could not be defeated, because by the Divine Providence it had fallen to our lot to take up the cause of the oppressed. It was not that we are all we ought to be in our private, civic, and national life; it was not that we were not in many respects, foolish, greedy, unscrupulous and base. God forgive us for the sinners that we are!. But when Germany asserted her faith in might and brute strength, God's cause of righteousness, liberty and humanity fell to us to defend. How proud we ought to be that the occasion for our entering this war was not to assert any selfish claim, or any vaunting pride, but to defend a small and outraged nationality! And we entered the war to suffer. Some indeed there were who rejoiced at the very thought of war, who would indeed have had us go to war with Germany in any case for our own selfish ends. But let us never forget that we entered this war to suffer, and we could never have borne all we have, except that it was our lot to fight on God's side for His great purposes. One or other of the Allies has suffered from time to time some staggering blow, or some great catastrophe. Except God had been with us, we could never have endured to the end. No matter how great the reverses, how severe the strain, God was marching on. And now we see militarism overthrown, not only in the field, but within its own borders; and our brave, weary men can at last lay down their arms, praying, most of them, I am sure, that they never see war again, but mightily proud to have fought in this great war.

I can scarcely speak as there comes to my mind the thought of the almost heart-breaking joy with which millions of parents and wives will receive the news to-day. For years they have been torn with constant anxiety lest they might never see their dear lads' faces again. Scarcely a post has come but the hearts' beat has been checked for fear of the news it might bring. Not one of our greatest victories has been won but that they have feared to rejoice lest soon they should have to mourn. And they have stood the strain magnificently, because, whether they always knew it or not, God has been with them. He has inspired them with the same faith with which

our noblest men have been inspired—and they have surrendered their dear ones to God's will. And now, how glad they'll be. Their lads are still alive, still safe and sound, and soon they'll have them in their arms. Thank God for the family link renewed.

But for some, aye for more than we dare think of, the dear fellows they would welcome back are lying buried in a soldiers' grave. They cannot rejoice at the glad prospect of a welcome home; but we can help them to bear their bereavement. We can determine that their men shall not have died in vain by our endeavour to erect a worthy memorial for them. King David, when some of his heroes risked their lives to procure for him a draught of water, refused to drink it, but poured it out to God, saying, "with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it." At the cost of their lives millions of gallant men have brought us the goblet of peace. Like David, let us refuse to drink it for any low purpose, but rather for the glory of God. We have the chance now of building up a new and better world. Many, no doubt, would be idly content to go on in the same old way as before the war, with their lives immersed in crude commercialism and national animosities, using their precious lifetime, and the precious lifetime of their fellow men merely for self gratification and self interest. We must change all that. Look for a moment at Germany! Defeat for her has meant that at last her people have got a chance to show if they are made of better stuff than Kaisers, commercial princes, armament magnates, and military chiefs. So that, whatever punishment they have to bear, defeat will be a blessing, at least, in that it gives them a chance to make a fresh start. It is for us to use our victory to make a fresh start too; for if we go on in the same old way as before, we shall always be hovering on the brink of war. We do not want to see a bloody revolution, but we do need a revolution of heart. Think of the untold agony these four years have brought! Then look to the future, and determine that we will never let it happen again. Those in comfortable or high positions must be prepared for great sacrifices. Those in a lower walk of life must show themselves worthy of high responsibilities; and all must trust in high ideals, generous affection, spiritual forces; in short, all must trust in God's power rather than man's. How are the mighty fallen! God is God, and without God no empire long can stand. Let us, then, at this sacred, solemn, exhilarating hour, turn our thoughts rather to our own duties and responsibilities than to grinding the enemy any lower than defeat has brought him, or just reparation needs.

This is a great day. At one moment the tears well to our eyes, at another our hearts laugh with joy. Never, I believe, in the lifetime of any of us, will there be such a wonderful day as this. It is the birthday of a new world. The pains of travail have been long and severe; but the day at last has been born. It rests on us to make it the birthday of a better world, the inauguration of the heavenly kingdom here on earth, in our very midst. Think of the dead. Let us prove that their sacrifices have not been in vain!



THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY AND PEACE.

By Presbyter.

We have heard the joyful news of victory, and from millions assembled in cathedrals and churches and meeting houses, the voice of praise and thanksgiving has ascended. Over the vast populations of cities passed a frenzy of rejoicing that hostilities had ceased. In Belfast was there ever witnessed within the memory of the oldest inhabitant such complete abandonment to merry-making and gladness that now peace was practically secured, as on November 11th, when soldiers and lassies joined hands and danced like young children in rings in the centre of the city? England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Italy, the United States, joined in one glad pæan of united thanksgiving: "We praise Thee, O

God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord." Never more heartily did a congregation ever sing "All People that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice," than did the congregation in Belfast Cathedral on that historic night. Within a week thrones and crowns had perished, kingdoms had waned, the reign of despotism ceased, and from the Rhine to the Volga the air resounded with the shouts of liberty, "kings had fallen like leaves in autumn."

There were thousands for whom the occasion was not one for any demonstration, but simply for silent tears. There were those who had hoped against hope, who had last heard of loved ones perhaps as wounded and prisoners of war in Germany, who now learned that they would never see them in this world again. There were those who felt that sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, sweethearts, had been foully murdered and wronged, and lifted clenched fists to heaven, and hissed the name of German with loathing and detestation; and human nature must be forgiven, for the smart was ill to bide! "Unto the Lord belongeth mercy, for He shall render unto every man according to his deeds."

The brand of Cain is set upon the brow of Germany, of Austria, of Bulgaria, of Turkey. The blame is not on the kings alone; the people are not innocent, and no cry of Republicanism, or professions of liberty can exonerate them for their crimes against humanity, against civilisation. The bestial orders of their rulers and leaders would have been powerless had not the people themselves been only too willing to carry them out.

Germany for generations had been fed on ideals of future national greatness built upon the sword, under the greatest murderer and criminal in history, whose name will go down to posterity coupled with that of Nero. Delighting in cruelty, sanctioning cruelty, blaspheming the holy name of God by styling himself "the scourge of God," and threatening woe upon all who dare oppose his will, under him and others, kindred spirits to himself, apt and willing learners in the devil's school, Germany held before herself ideals which yielded the fruitage of death and defeat. Rightly to Germany and her allies applied the words of the Prophet Jeremiah: "Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall."

History moves at a rapid pace. Events of tremendous importance, of far-reaching results, succeed each other with bewildering swiftness. Re-construction is the word of the hour, and on the ruins of the old order are being laid the foundations of the new.

The horrors still fresh in our memories are in their totality the ripened harvest of intense selfishness, of an exaggerated individualism. Good and evil are always relative terms, changing their content as humanity progresses, and the struggle is always between good plus evil as against evil plus good. The war developed quickly into a conflict between opposing ideals: despotism and liberty. At the beginning it was stated that "the Great War is not only a war against the form of rigid materialism represented by the German military despotism seeking to impose its will upon the world, it is a war against despotism everywhere—against despotism in England, in France, in Russia, in India. On the physical plane the war finds expression on the battlefields of Europe, in Africa, in Arabia. But a moral war is raging in every quarter of the globe, and only when the moral victory is assured may we hope to see an end of those horrors of the battlefield, which are indeed but physical representations of moral horrors which for so long we have criminally suffered to pollute the world. We are fighting a fight for freedom. And the freedom we need is freedom to grow according to the nature of the God within us; freedom to receive opportunities suitable to our capacities; freedom to serve the State, freedom to lead happy useful lives."

The cleansing fire of God has been at work trying to rid the nations of great evils—evils in social life, evils in dealing with subject peoples, evils in dealing with the poor and the helpless and down-trodden. As long as those evils persist, the fire will try every nation's work of what sort it is.

Is it really peace at last? The war between nations surely has ceased; but what of the mutterings of war within the nations, of conflicts that might easily leap into bloody revolutions?

Merrily o'er the fields, o'er moors and hills, and out on the surface of the waters, the music of bells will ring out on Christmas morning, and sweet-voiced children will be heard in old familiar carols, that start the tears in many an eye: "Hark the herald angels sing." Again the word of peace in the name of the Prince of Peace will be uttered with new power. If only in and through that word could be heard a voice commanding, sweet and strong, as refreshing as living water to the weary souls of men, bidding the nations to cease from their quarrellings; bidding the warring classes to know themselves as one, the Christ-spirit would steal into the hearts of men, weaning them from bitter feelings, from thoughts of hatred and revenge, from memories of cruel wrongs, in truth in the cave of the heart would the Christ-child be born, and with the dawn of the New Day would vanish spectres of the night. Peace! Peace! Peace!

HOW THE GOOD NEWS WAS RECEIVED IN LONDON.

A friend, writing home from London, says:—We have had a wonderful week! You ask if we celebrated the peace? Didn't we just! Some of us, perhaps, just a little overdid it. On Monday we were rather in an expectant mood, but early in the day nothing was known, and everyone settled to work as usual. Indeed, nothing was seen or heard out of the ordinary way till just at eleven o'clock to the tick (11 o'clock on the 11th day of the 11th month), bang went the maroons, boom, boom went the guns. Every window was flung up, and people called out, "is it peace or an air-raid?" At 11-10 o'clock there wasn't a house that hadn't a flag or flags out, and the streets were absolutely thronged with people laughing and cheering and hurrahing and waving flags and handkerchiefs. In Holborn they were mostly young people, and thousands of girls trooped out of the big offices. The offices and shops were deserted, and business was immediately at a standstill. We who were at business at the time put on our hats and coats and went off to St. Pauls. The whole of the steps of the Cathedral, and all round was a dense crowd of respectable people cheering and singing, no rowdyism anywhere. We made our way through the crowd and went inside. There was no service going on, but hundreds of people (a great many middle-aged men among them) were kneeling in prayer most devoutly. I think many of us had the same impulse to return thanks at once. It was a most moving and inspiring moment. I saw one who did not kneel, but who burst into tears, and sobbed for several minutes. The crowd outside sang "Land of Hope and Glory," and I am sorry we missed it. Then we walked back soberly enough, but with a great gladness in our hearts. The streets were momentarily growing gayer. Many of the young girls had small flags put on their heads in the same way as the V.A.D. nurses' caps are worn, and those who retained their hats had two Union Jacks stuck upright in the front of the bands so as to form a kind of cockade. The boys cut flags in the middle, and put them over their heads, and wore them as a kind of collar. Cars of all kinds began to run up and down (where the petrol came from I don't know), loaded with girls, all standing up in the centre, and sitting round the sides, and waving flags and cheering. The Tommies, too, were not behindhand, and any soldier or sailor, especially a Colonial, came in for an ovation. A taxi, with a young officer standing on the roof waving a Union Jack, and the rest of the taxi filled with men in kaki or munition

girls, was a frequent sight. I shall never forget it all—everyone was so full of life and gaiety, and I did not see any roughness or rude behaviour, though they shouted and sang and cheered, and gave themselves up to the joy of the moment. Inside the churches the older people, and those who had lost their sons or husbands, were praying and wiping the tears from their eyes. One lady in our road, who had four sons at the front (one of them killed, but the other three are all right), died from joy. The good news was too much for her. One thing I forgot to tell you, and it was very impressive. After the maroons had stopped, about 11-45 o'clock, a bugler came through the City sounding the "all clear," and I hope I shall never have occasion to listen for it again. I am thankful to have seen "the day." I enclose an epitaph for the Kaiser :—

"The only German soldier who never fired a gun,
The only German father who never lost a son,
He called himself the God of War, but he never faced a fight,
And when he crawled beneath the sod, the world just yelled 'Good-night'!"

ADOLESCENCE.

We read of how the Spirit of God descended on Jesus at his baptism. It was then that, according to certain sections of the early Church (branded later on by the dominant Catholic Church as heretical), that he became the Christ. The Adoptionists quoted in this connection the rendering of a certain codex of Luke, of the voice from heaven, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee; this day have I made thee my Son.

In every human being, in the order of nature, there is a reflection of this process. A lady writer in a contemporary, deals with the intense importance of this period of life, when childhood is being left behind, and a great crisis has come, of which parents and teachers are too often oblivious, and dangers lie in the path of the youth and maiden through which they should be skilfully and tactfully guided, to avoid results mental and physical which may dog their footsteps during the remainder of life.

Here in the bud it is possible to nip the evils, which in fruition present almost hopeless problems alike to social and political reformers.

"As the physical body comes into existence at the moment of birth, so at adolescence takes place another equally definite birth, which revolutionises the child's thoughts, feelings, and general outlook. Physically the change is a sexual development, but from the higher planes it illuminates all aspects of life. New avenues or vistas of thought and feeling open out on all sides, and tremendous revelations pour down upon the adolescent from the Creator Himself. Man is made in the image of God, and this is the time when the likeness is completed. Alas for the child who is without due preparation for the descent of Adonai!"

This touches on one of the most fundamental questions of human life, and at the present time public opinion with reference to it is swinging violently like a pendulum from one extreme to the other. "The tendency at the moment seems to be to ignore sex altogether, as if it were a fictitious distinction." That is seen in education, where the idea is either to keep boys and girls entirely together, or to keep them almost entirely separate. In occupations where men and women are entering the same line of work, the fact is often ignored in the claim for equal opportunities, that the intellect of men and women may be equivalent without being equal or identical. Truth never lies in extremes; on each side some important factor is overlooked and upsets all calculations. Head and heart need to be balanced, and in man it is the head that rules more than the heart, while in woman it is the opposite. Of course no hard and fast line can be drawn. In the community as a whole, these forces need to be balanced if harmony is to exist in society.

There has been a mischievous confusion between modesty and prudery. Modesty is a right and natural instinct, and is associated with reverence for the Creative Power, and the silence is that which pertains to deeply sacred matters. Prudery is the counterfeit of this, " for the sake of appearances, where the original reverence has been destroyed, and only a sense of degradation and shame is present."

Surely this is a distinction to be noted, indicating how the subject should be approached, not to be dragged out into publicity in any haphazard sort of way, calculated to do more harm than good, but with the consciousness of its great importance, for " if a right attitude towards sex could be established in society at large, most other evils would disappear, because harmony would be brought into being, and would soon pervade the whole." " A few children have the strength to protect themselves in the midst of whirlwinds of chaotic and destructive forces, but the great mass are dependent on their family and the community. For them religion and politics are hereditary, as is the attitude towards sex and all ideas about it." A hopeful sign of the times is the humble acknowledgment of ignorance and expressions of desire to find out the truth and walk in the right way.

" Our object is to help nature, that the result will be more perfect than if nature had been left alone." For this the cultivation of reverence in boys and girls is absolutely necessary, and the lack of it among modern children results in misery and vice. Is this not a strong reason for the cultivation of religious habits, for fostering reverence to the ordinances of religion, the indifference towards which is a blight upon the social life of to-day. Without guidance of religion we shall be all at sea in dealing with this problem Physiological and psychological information is right and necessary, but religion is needed with it. The force in boys shows itself in love of adventure, in girls it is co-related with the emotions connected with prayer, adoration, sacrifice, and the enduring of pain.

These are the days of re-construction. In the building up of the new education, this subject needs to be understood clearly, and allowed for, so that the rising generation shall go forward on lines of life that are healthy and sane, with pure minds in healthy bodies, realising that holiness unto the Lord is health of body and soul.

ULLIN.

LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

(To be used in accordance with the Scheme of Instruction for 1918, issued by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.)

1st Dec. *The giving of the Law.* Read Exodus xix. 1-11, 16-20. Key text, Exodus xix. 5.

Introduction. With immense difficulty Moses discharged the divine commission and brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. But he had not led them only to deliver them from the slavery of Egypt. His main purpose was to bring them to the service of the one true God. Their freedom was the preliminary step to a nobler life. Herein is a great lesson for all. Children to-day have untold advantages compared with the children of long ago. By means of good homes, kind friends, healthy surroundings, and good education they are set free from hunger, disease, misery, and ignorance. But they have not been made free merely in order to have a comfortable, lazy time. No, they are made free in order to become better, wiser, and kinder men and women. *For elder scholars* stress the fact that our Churches are based on freedom. This does not mean that their members are therefore free to think about nothing at all or to do just as they please. Their duty is to think hard about and work hard for those things that make for a truly noble and useful life.

1. *The scene of the Law-giving.* After a journey of three months, the Israelites came to the vast wilderness of Sinai, at the edge of which rose up the great mountain range wherein Jehovah was believed to have his dwelling-place. Anyone who has stood at the foot of a range of mountains and seen the

clouds circling their summits like a vast white army, and heard the roar of the thunder storm echoing through their clefts and crevices, must admit that there indeed is the great power of God revealed. We, however, have learnt that God is not only omnipotent, but also all-loving, and therefore we believe that He is best to be found in kind and loving hearts. It is good to fear God; but it is better to love Him. Yet let us remember that Jesus used to go into the mountain to pray. We should do well also to seek God among the mountains, as well as in the gentler scenes of life.

2. *The purpose of the Law.* See key text. It was to be a link between God and the Israelites. He told them that only in so far as they obeyed His will could they be His people. Most beautifully has Jesus expressed this truth in the statement that only those who did the will of his Father would he regard as his brothers and sisters. N.B.—The statement that obedience to the law would make them all His priests did not mean what we mean when we speak of priests and ministers. What it means is that every good boy and girl, every good man and woman preaches a most beautiful and valuable sermon in every kindly and honest deed and every generous and pure thought.

3. *The ceremonial.* It is noteworthy that the Israelites were ordered to make themselves worthy of the law by means of all sorts of ceremonies and cleansings. To-day we teach the same thing when we say that all those who would serve God must be reverent in their behaviour and clean in person. But most important of all, if we would make sure of knowing the divine will, we must have clean hearts. A little girl once threw down a loaf of bread, which was meant for a starving person, into a muddy pool, in order to keep her boots clean. But even though she had clean boots, she was a bad girl, because she had not a clean heart.

4. *The nature of the Law.* Read Exodus xxi. 1-17 for the Ten Commandments.

8th December. The Ingratitude of the Israelites. Read Numbers xi. 4-15. Key text, Numbers xi. 1.

Introduction. To reach the Promised Land the Israelites had to travel through vast tracks of desert and wilderness. At last their patience gave out, and they began to blame Moses and murmur against God.

1. *The great difficulty of being good.* All those who take on a new enterprise must be prepared for toil and hardship. No really good thing comes without struggle. That is why the motto "Be prepared" is of such importance. If we would get to a new country, or if we would become noble, great, and good, we must be prepared to pay the price. The children of Israel, however, only remembered in their difficulties that when they were slaves in Egypt they had enough to eat and somewhere to sleep. They forgot the degradation of their slavery and the noble life before them. They were like those children whose affection for others is "cupboard love," refusing to be good unless they are pampered; and, like those men and women who refuse to be good and brave and true if their ease and comfort are to be disturbed. They cried for the fleshpots of Egypt rather than face the difficulties of getting to the freedom and prosperity of the Promised Land. What a contrast between the behaviour of these people and that of the little Dutch boy who sat throughout one cold, dark night, with his fingers in a hole in the dyke, to prevent the dyke cracking and letting in the great sea to flood the land and drown the people; or again, that little Australian boy of nine and his sister of seven who were lost in a wilderness without food for a week, and yet bravely kept their tiny brother warm between them, so that when found he was the best nourished of them all! Contrast also the hardships which are bravely borne by explorers like Franklin, Shackleton, or Scott, by our gallant soldiers, and by such men as St. Paul and John Milton.

The Ingratitude to Moses. It was not as if Moses was forcing them to go where they did not want. They *all* wanted to go to the Promised Land. Therefore Moses was not responsible for their sufferings. We must be loyal to those who lead us, as, for instance, the 300

Spartans defending the Pass of Thermopylae against enormous odds, were loyal to their leader, Leonidas, until the last of them was slain.

15*th December*. *The Death of Moses*. *Read Deuteronomy* xxxiv. Key text, Deut. xxxiv. 10.

Introduction. Moses' great courage and skill, fortified by his faith in God, overcame all difficulties and complaints, and, at last, after many years of wandering, he brought them to the borders of the Promised Land.

1. *The Fate of Moses*. He had spent almost the whole of his long life in the service of his people ; but, now, stricken with years, the old hero learnt that he would not live to lead them into the land of their desires. From the top of Mount Pisgah he was vouchsafed a vision of the land, and then he died. Many folk would be inclined to say, what a tragedy ! But that is the fate of most of the world's greatest men. They aim so high that earth cannot give all they desire. Yet, is it not far better to have climbed so high as to be able to see good and noble things than to remain ignorant, selfish, and base? Moses' work was no failure, even though he died without being able to enjoy all its benefits. He had led his people through grave danger and difficulties ; he had freed them from Egyptian slavery, and he gave to them a law (of which the Ten Commandments are the heart) which even to this day is the pride of the Jews. Mazzini, the great Italian patriot, suffered a similar fate. He, more than anyone, led the Italians to unity and freedom, yet he died in exile, only seeing his ideal from afar off, leaving it, as Moses did, to other men to carry out.

2. *The Character of Moses*. See key text. He was able to lead men because he let God lead him.

22*nd December*. *Christmas Lesson*. Read Luke ii. 1-20. Key text, Luke ii. 7.

Teachers ought to be able to make this Christmas lesson interesting without the aid of notes. But two points should be emphasised.

1. *No room in the inn*. Read key text. So much occupied were men with selfish pursuits that they could not give room to the Christ-child to be born. In the same way, when boys and girls are told to do good deeds, they will often reply that they can't be bothered. They are so full of little meannesses and selfishnesses that they have no room for Jesus, and yet if they made room for Him, their mean little lives would be transformed into palaces of beauty and goodness. Where Jesus is, there is the Kingdom of God. Again, it does not follow, because a child is born in a lowly manger, like Mary's child, that he is not greater far than those born in comfortable positions. The child born 1918 years ago in the manger, of poor parents, was the greatest man the world has known. So too, many a little child to-day, who lives in a back street, may develop into a benefactor of mankind. Let us make room for Jesus, and then we shall become like him, worthy to be called children of God.

2. "*Peace on earth, and goodwill to* men" (verse 14. Whether we read it like that, or "Peace on earth among men of goodwill," the meaning is the same.) It is the lesson all have to learn from this war, namely, that war can never bring peace. Now that the war is done, it is for all of us, great and small, young and old, to show a spirit of goodwill to those about us, which, extending, until there is goodwill throughout the world, will link us all in a noble and blessed peace.

29*th December*. Review.

E. H. P.

Sunday School Committee.

The subject of the annual essay is to be chosen from one of the three following :—

1. "The Character of the Early Church."
2. "St. Paul as a Missionary."
3. "The Chief Events of Joseph's Career."

The essays are to be in the hands of Rev. S. E. Bowen by January 31st, 1919.

Will each competitor enclose essays under a nom-de-plume, and state his or her age ?

Reports.

Glenarm.— We regret to announce the death of Rifleman Thomas M'Killop, Royal Irish Rifles, killed in action in France on 14th September, 1918. He was the third son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M'Killop, of Ballyvaddy, who, considering the distance they have to come, set a good example to others nearer the meeting-house in the matter of attendance at public worship. They have the satisfaction of knowing that their son laid down his life in a just and righteous cause. We wish to assure them of our sincere sympathy in their great bereavement.

* *

Greyabbey.—Within a few weeks the deaths have taken place of three valued members of our church—Mrs. Thaney Robinson, Jim Murphy, and Ellie Hamilton. Mrs. Robinson passed away after a few days illness, a victim of influenza, followed by pneumonia. Although she lived a considerable distance from the church, she was most regular in her attendance. Much sympathy is felt for her husband and her three little children. Jim Murphy's illness was not at first considered serious, but cardiac troubles arising, he gradually became weaker, and death came to him very quietly. He had been brought up as a lad in our Sunday school, and it was most unusual to miss him from any of our services. He was an only son, and his father and mother have the deep sympathy of everyone. A third loss has been sustained by us in the death from pneumonia of Ellie Hamilton, a member of our choir, and a Sunday school scholar. By her gentleness and thoughtfulness she had endeared herself to all who knew her. The choir and Sunday school procured a wreath, which was placed on her grave by Mr. Robert Warnock, the Superintendent of the Sunday school. Many expressions of sympathy were heard for her home folk when the news of her death became known.

Moira.—On Sunday, the 27th October, Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held here, conducted morning and evening by Rev. W. A. Weatherall (Cork), to whom the congregation listened with close attention. The evening service was an exceptionally large one, every available seat being filled, and also additional forms in the aisles. The church was beautifully decorated by members of the congregation. The musical programme was much appreciated, under the direction of Mr. Ernest Worth, who, with friends from Belfast, gave valuable help to our own choir. The collections were very satisfactory, being an increase on former years. On Sunday, the 17th November, our morning service was one of Thanksgiving for Peace, and in the evening a United Service was held in the Parish Church, in which all the congregations of the town joined. The service was conducted by the four ministers of the district—Rev. W. E. Hurst (Rector), Rev. T. G. M'Farland (Presbyterian), Rev. Wilson (Methodist) and Rev. Wm. Weatherall (Unitarian).

* *

Raloo.—Harvest Services were held on the third of November in the above church. The minister preached in the morning to the usual congregation from John xv. 1., " I am the true vine, and my Father is the Husbandman." The decorations were not so extensive as on other occasions, owing to the house being newly done up, and which was looking quite new in appearance. The service in the evening was conducted by the Moderator of our Church, the Rev. A. Turner, of Templepatrick, when there was a full house, the preacher taking for his theme " The Sower and the Reaper." He showed how the Master wished his message to be understood by his disciples. They were not to expect to reap in a few days after they had sowed. The sowers and reapers were part of a Divine plan, and were working out God's purposes in the world and in man. He illustrated his subject from history, and showed how steadfast and unmovable the sowers were, and always abounded in

the work of the Lord. He also illustrated that same spirit of determination by what he had seen on the battlefield among the soldiers, and the self-sacrifice they made for home and country and civil and religious liberty. He also applied it to our own times and to ourselves, and emphasised the great need of sowing the good seed of God, for it would bring forth a harvest of benefits and blessings to future generations. Miss M'Keown, Kilwaughter, presided at the harmonium, and Miss Woodside and Miss Finlay sang a duet, which was very much appreciated. The singing of the Harvest hymns was hearty and cheering and uplifting. Both services were good, and thrilled with earnestness, and people said the Spirit of the Lord was with us.

Raloo congregation during the last two months has lost three of its members by death. Mrs. W. Craig, Carneal, who reached the ripe age of 85 years, was most kind in nature and disposition, and was respected and loved by all who knew her. Her end was peaceful, and enshrined in hope, and she waited for the rest that remains for the people of God. Miss L. Drummond, of Raloo, was a lifelong member of our church, and took a keen interest in all its welfare, and as long as health permitted she attended our services and communion. But during the last few years she was an invalid, and bore her suffering with great fortitude. She was cheerful in disposition, and straightforward in all her ways, and cherished the faith that gave her light at eventide. Miss E. Mahon, of Ballyvallough, attained the ripe old age of 82 years. She was a lifelong member of our church. No one could have been more regular in attendance at our services. Wet and dry Sundays were alike to her. She has left us an example of faithfulness and devotion to duty which is worthy of being followed. She was upright in all her ways. She was optimistic in faith, and prayed when she took ill that the end would not be delayed, and it was answered as she desired. She was interested in the growth of our cause, and was an admirer of all good works.

Roughfort.—A meeting of the parents of children and inhabitants of Roughfort and district was held in the Orange Hall, Roughfort, on the 20th inst., to protest against the closing of Roughfort National School. Mr. George Pullan, of Messrs. Pullan & Co., of Roughfort, was called to the chair, and Mr. Wm. Stewart was appointed secretary.

Mr. Pullan spoke in strong terms in favour of the school, and said that everything would be done that could be done to keep the school open, for the main reason that it was greatly needed in the district. He drew attention to the fine set of school buildings and their admirable equipment, and deplored the proposal to scatter the children among outlying schools, the nearest of which was one and a half miles away, and others more than two miles. He saw nothing but educational neglect of the young in the proposal, and urged that instead of closing the school more should be done for the children of the Roughfort.

Mr. William Stewart, in a moving speech, proposed the following resolutions :—

" We beg to point out to the Commissioners :

" (1) That a school had been found necessary in the Roughfort for a great number of years before the introduction of the national school system, and that the present school has been under the National Board from the commencement of that system.

" (2) That for the majority of the children in and around the Roughfort no school is available within a reasonable distance.

" (3) That to compel young children to walk a distance of one and a half, and in many cases more, miles twice a day in all weathers is to place almost insuperable difficulties in the way of their obtaining any education, and to run the risk of ruining the health of many of them.

" (4) That the closing of the Roughfort National School will lead to overcrowding of outlying schools in the district, and will force our children to spend their school hours under unhealthy conditions.

"(5) We are of opinion that the present school accommodation of this district is not in excess of the needs of the community, and that the Roughfort Schoolhouse, which is excellent as Irish national schools go, must be maintained if the educational requirements of this district are to be properly met."

Mr. William Walker seconded, and these were carried with acclamation.

The Chairman called upon Dr. Campbell, who said it would be a very hard thing to have the school in which he had received his early education closed, a school which was in such splendid repair and condition, and in which much greatly needed work was being done. He dealt with the subject from a health point of view, and said there was not enough breathing space in the schools of the country as it is, and that packing all the children that could be packed into one school was against the health of the children. And that from the point of view of health it was a retrograde step to close such a well-equipped school as the one at the Roughfort. Dr. Campbell then made special reference to the late Lieut. John Caruth, killed in action, who was principal teacher of the school. He said:—"As he has gone forever from us, it is our no less sacred duty to preserve the school in which he worked, and to have his name permanently enshrined within its walls. When we have repelled the present attempt to close the school, I would suggest that a suitable memorial should be erected in the school to his memory. That is the least we can do to keep green the remembrance of a brave man. I would even go further and support a movement to have placed upon its walls a memorial to all the former scholars of the school who have fallen in the great war, or to all the old scholars who have served with the British Army in France or other foreign country, whether alive or dead. I am sure the present manager would co-operate with us in such a scheme." (Applause.)

Mr. F. J. Bigger said he came there having heard that there was a proposal to close the Roughfort School. His father was educated in the school, and he (the speaker) claimed that they would maintain the school. Our children, he said, had a right to be educated in their own district. He spoke of the necessity of education for the young, and impressed upon parents the necessity of sending their children regularly to school.

It was resolved that copies of the resolutions be sent to Mr. Coote, M.P.; Sir Edward Carson, M.P.; Colonel M'Calmont, D.S.O., M.P.; Lieut.-Col. Sir James Craig, Bart., M.P., and others.

On the motion of Mr. R. Thompson, seconded by Mr. S. Ritchie, the best thanks of the meeting were given to the Chairman, and the meeting closed with the doxology.

* *

York Street, Belfast.—We are pleased to announce that Sapper Jim Neill, of 122nd Company R.E., attached to the Ulster Division, has won the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry and devotion to duty on the field. Sapper Neill is the son of Mr. James Neill, Roden Street, Belfast, for many years the treasurer of the York Street congregation, and grandson of the late Mr. John Montgomery, also an esteemed member of the church. We heartily congratulate Sapper Neill upon gaining this honour.

"We have no right to live idle and useless lives. A useless life is as bad as—nay worse than death. One had better be dead than living an idle, profligate, selfish, and useless life."

DEATH.

M'LELLAN—At the Military Hospital, Ghent, Flanders, on April 16th, 1918, Adam M'Lellan, No. 4 Section, D Company, 25th Batt., M.C.G., B.E.F., France. Wounded and prisoner of war.

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